

THESE BIG HOTELS

What we want is to live boldly forever
with hair that never mats, grays or falls
chain-smoking and feeling good about it
as if cancer and heart disease were only
so much nonsense, like elephant jokes.

We want poise and confidence
to be men and women of action
modern singles unencumbered
by conventional lifestyles
we want to be upward mobile and dollar smart
we want good times and we want them now.

We want to move gracefully
freely in inner circles
everyone's darling
the one essential party guest
a name that never leaves the air.

These ladies
stretched out prone on the sun deck
with swept back hair and floppy hats
from Vogue magazine
so annoyed at sunburn peel
a fat Harold Robinson halved on one knee
what do they know of our anguish,
our terrible destiny?

We want to drink like fish nightly
and never suffer hangover or remorse.

These big hotels
see thousands come and go in a good season
mountains of linen are laundered
millions of pieces of silverware are cleaned
in oceans of detergent water
what do they know,
the porters and the chambermaids
of our meal alone at sunset,
our solitary sleeping?

What we want is nothing less
than beauty and perfection.
What we get is heartaches, stomach trouble,
wax in our ears, bad hearts,
thinning hair
clothes that are ill-fitting
cars that break down
money problems, expensive repair bills
self doubts, disillusionment
and the most awful indifference,
the not mattering of our passing.

These melancholy palm trees
a hundred lining the ocean front parkway
with a postcard blue sky above
white clouds and gulls
before our fling at immortality.

ORPHEUS

Orpheus has fame. and money. a
publisher eager for new texts. everyone
knows his name; he's a national hero.
but this sandy haired boy

the punk poet from nowhere
is loved by the crowds
at the Cafe Des Poets.

A hot youth. 18 and beautiful
drunk as a greek god. lighting yet
another cigarette at 4 in the afternoon.
published by a princess in the nude.

Sees Orpheus consumed by jealousy. his
reputation no consolation.

A brawl breaks out, spills
out onto the narrow streets.
two black cyclists (we know them as
the angels of death) strike as twin bees.
blood trickles from his lips.

She is his death.

Come along, Orpheus, make
yourself useful. carry him into the car.
that long ride through a negative hell.
the usual route. the usual route.
our suicide chauffeur.
the monotone radio announcer.
between bands of static.
the bird sings with its fingers. one time.

Her chateau; champagne and cigarettes.
she levitates the cadaver like tinfoil
dancing in an electrical storm.
together they step through
mirrors that do not reflect enough.